

CHINA. No. 2 (1906).

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO THE

DECREE

ISSUED BY THE

CHINESE GOVERNMENT

ON

MAY 9, 1906,

RESPECTING THE

CHINESE IMPERIAL MARITIME CUSTOMS.

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*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
December 1906.*

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Further Correspondence relating to the Decree issued by the
Chinese Government on May 9, 1906, respecting the
Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs.

No. 1.

Mr. Carnegie to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received August 1.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, August 1, 1906.

A COPY, of which the following is a translation, of the new instructions to the Inspector-General of Customs was sent me yesterday by Mr. Tong:—

“Hitherto all Customs affairs have been under the control of the Wai-wu Pu and Hu Pu (Board of Revenue). In obedience to the Imperial Decree, we have established the Shui-wu Ch’u (Revenue Council) for the special management of these affairs, and it will enter upon the administration thereof on the 22nd July. Thereafter all Customs affairs which in any way concern revenue business—over and above such as involve international relations, which shall continue to be transacted by the Wai-wu Pu, and the appropriation of revenue, which shall follow the directions of the Board of Revenue—shall be reported directly to this Council, to be considered and dealt with by it.”

I do not see that objection can be taken to these instructions, assuming that if the Revenue Council merely takes the place of the Wai-wu Pu the stipulations of the Loan Agreements will not be infringed, and that under the Finance Council the members of the Customs service, from the Inspector-General downwards, continue to have the same functions, duties, and responsibilities as under the Wai-wu Pu. The instructions are wanting in this respect: that the Inspector-General is not explicitly ordered in them to carry on as before, and I propose to draw Mr. Tong’s attention seriously to the matter on Friday next, when he returns from the Summer Palace.

I am inquiring into the facts connected with rumours which have reached me that the previous practice in the Statistical Department and at Amoy have been materially altered.

No. 2.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Carnegie.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, August 2, 1906.

THE proposal contained in your telegram of yesterday is approved.

No. 3.

Mr. Carnegie to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received August 5.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, August 5, 1906.

I HAVE the honour to report, with reference to your telegram of the 2nd instant, that last Friday I asked Mr. Tong, whom I saw at his house, why directions to carry on as before were not contained in the instructions to the Inspector-General. I urged him to issue to the Inspector-General, for communication to his subordinates, instructions in that sense, and thus meet the wishes of His Majesty’s Government. Uneasiness existed in many quarters which such a step would go far to allay, and the requirements of His Majesty’s Government would probably be met by it. To this, however, Mr. Tong would not consent. On two occasions, he said, verbal instructions to carry

on as before had been given to Sir Robert Hart by T'ieh and himself, and therefore as these instructions were in no sense private, he was at liberty, if he thought fit, to circulate them.

His Excellency defied any one to show proof of cause for alarm at the new instructions, and could not understand the excitement which he believed they had caused. I mentioned reports I had heard about the Customs statistics and the Amoy custom-house. He knew nothing of the latter, but said, in regard to the former, that the Board only wished to see these and other reports before the Inspector-General published them.

He then proceeded to give me his views, which did not appear unreasonable, respecting necessary improvements in the method of rendering financial reports and in the compilation of statistics. He desired to increase the efficiency of the Customs, but denied emphatically any intention to change its administration.

Your telegram of the 2nd instant was received on the same day, and Mr. Tong was again pressed by Mr. Campbell to meet your wishes. He could not be persuaded to send orders in writing, but so far yielded as to promise to direct Sir R. Hart, when he saw him, to issue a Circular, if he had not already done so, in the sense we desired.

His Majesty's Consul-General at Shanghai confirms Mr. Tong's statement respecting the statistics. He has ascertained that directions have been given to that Department that returns relating to purely customs and revenue business are to be sent to the new Board instead of, as hitherto, to the Wai-wu Pu.

The question at Amoy, on which I have received a report from His Majesty's Consul, is apparently of small importance.

No. 4.

Mr. Carnegie to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received August 8.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, August 8, 1906.

PLEASE see my telegram of the 5th instant.

I understand that it is proposed to issue a Circular on Sir R. Hart's return to Peking, in which the verbal instructions given to him by the Administrators-General will be embodied, and to address despatches to the Revenue Council and the Wai-wu Pu, in which the issue of this Circular will be placed on record.

No. 5.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received September 22.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, September 22, 1906.

PLEASE refer to Mr. Carnegie's telegram of the 8th August.

I was to-day informed by Mr. Tong that Sir Robert Hart and himself had this morning agreed as to the wording of the Circular.

No. 6.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir J. Jordan.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, September 26, 1906.

YOUR telegram of the 22nd instant.

If the terms of the Circular are satisfactory, we attach importance to its publication, as calculated to restore confidence to some extent in foreign countries, as to the Chinese Government's intentions with regard to the question of the Customs Service. As the Edict by which confidence was impaired was public, the Chinese Government should communicate the reassuring Circular officially to us for publication here, if they do not publish it themselves.

The Chinese Government assured Mr. Carnegie that the instructions issued to Sir Robert Hart would not be private in any sense.

No. 7.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received September 27.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, September 26, 1906.

MY immediately preceding telegram.

I understand that following is substance of the Circular, which is dated the 22nd September.

The circumstances connected with the establishment of the new Revenue Council are first recited, after which the Circular states that on two separate occasions, the 12th and 15th May last, it was explained to the Inspector-General by the two Controllers that work should proceed as before. He is now, the Circular continues, authorized by them to circulate the intimation as an order for the general information of the Service. Further, the Inspector-General will have with the Revenue Council the same relations which he had with the Board of Foreign Affairs, and, speaking generally, his duties will follow the same lines, while the Commissioners and Staff at the ports will also continue in the same relation to the Inspector-General and continue to work just as before. The apprehensions which have been expressed since the 9th May, when the Customs Edict appeared, should be dispelled by this explanation; the Circular consequently admonishes the members of the Service against the origination or circulation of hypothetical fears and disturbing rumours by which public comment might be provoked. The Circular concludes by promising that the considerate and liberal treatment shown in the past shall still be accorded to the Service.

Satisfactory though the terms of the Circular apparently are, I am of opinion either that its publication should be authorized by the Chinese Government, or that a copy should be sent to the Legation officially.

No. 8.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir J. Jordan.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, September 29, 1906.

PLEASE refer to your telegram of the 26th instant.

We agree that the Circular is satisfactory as regards its terms, but we should insist upon its publication either in China or here. Unless they wish to throw doubt upon the sincerity of their assurances that the administration of the Customs is to continue as heretofore, the Chinese Government cannot refuse.

No. 9.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received October 3.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, October 3, 1906.

YOUR telegram of the 29th ultimo.

I received to-day a promise from Mr. Tong that publicity would be given to the Circular.

No. 10.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received October 10.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, October 10, 1906.

MY telegram of the 3rd instant.

It is proposed that the Revenue Council (Shui-wu Chu) shall forward the Circular officially to the Wai-wu Pu. The latter shall, in acknowledging it, authorize the Revenue Council to instruct Sir R. Hart to publish it in the next issue of the "Customs Quarterly Gazette," the official organ for Customs notifications, which will appear about the end of October. The fact that the publication will appear as made under the authority of the Wai-wu Pu, conveyed through the Revenue Council, will give it the sanction of the Chinese Government. The above method of procedure seems to me the best arrangement that can be made for publication in China.

No. 11.*

Sir Edward Grey to Sir J. Jordan.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, October 11, 1906.

SEE your telegram of the 10th instant.

This mode of publication can be accepted as satisfactory. I conclude that the notice in "Customs Gazette" will be copied by the native press.

No. 12.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received October 12.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, October 12, 1906.

YOUR telegram of the 11th instant.

The notice will be published both in English and Chinese. The native Chinese press are certain, I think, to copy the latter version. I do not, in any case, anticipate any difficulty in arranging that this should be done.

No. 13.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received October 31.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, October 31, 1906.

MY telegrams of the 3rd and 12th instant.

The necessary instructions have been received by the Inspector-General of Customs. He will publish the following documents in the next issue of the "Customs Gazette" in English and Chinese, by order of the Wai-wu Pu:—

1. Despatch from the Inspector-General to the Revenue Council (Shui-wu Chu), forwarding, for record, copy of the Circular of the 22nd September.
2. Copy of the Circular.
3. Copy of a despatch from the Revenue Council to the Inspector-General, communicating the authorization of the Wai-wu Pu for the publication of the Circular.

His Majesty's Consular officers are being instructed to see that a wide circulation is given to these documents in the Chinese press.

No. 14.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received November 17.)

(Extract.)

Peking, October 4, 1906.

WITH reference to my telegram of the 26th ultimo, I have the honour to transmit to you, herewith, copy of a Circular which has been issued under instructions from the Shui-wu Ch'u, by the Inspector-General of Customs to the Commissioners and other Customs officials at the ports explaining the position which the Service will occupy under the new régime.

Inclosure in No. 14.

Sir R. Hart to the Commissioners of Customs, Postal Commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners in Charge of Li-kin Collectories.

(Circular No. 1369. Second Series.)
Sir,

*Inspectorate-General of Customs, Peking,
September 22, 1906.*

CIRCULARS Nos. 1339 and 1361 acquainted you with the establishment and opening of a separate and special office to deal with Customs affairs. The Inspectorate which had hitherto functioned in and under the Tsung-li Yamên and Wai-wu Pu, was thereon accordingly instructed to report henceforth to, and take its orders from, the new

department, the Shui-wu Ch'u. The two Ta-ch'en appointed to control the Shui-wu Ch'u, their Excellencies T'ieh Liang and T'ang Shao-yi, explained to me on two separate occasions, on the 12th and 13th May, that work was to proceed as before, and they now authorize me to circulate this intimation as an order for the information of the Service generally. While the Inspector-General will have the same relations with the Shui-wu Ch'u that he had with the Wai-wu Pu, and his duties continue to follow the same general lines, Commissioners and Port Staff will also continue to work just as before and remain in the same relation to the Inspector-General. Further, seeing that this explanation should dispel apprehensions expressed since the appearance of the Customs Edict on the 9th May, the members of the Service are to avoid originating or circulating, whether by mouth or pen, disturbing rumours and hypothetical fears calculated to provoke public comment to no useful purpose, but which may do more harm than good, as affecting the dignity of the Chinese Government. The Maritime Customs worked satisfactorily, efficiently, and usefully in the past, and the Chinese Government has been considerate and liberal in its dealings with its foreign employes; it is not intended to change such treatment, and it is expected that Service contentment and efficiency will march hand in hand with its continuance. I may add that this Customs Circular has been submitted to and approved of by the Shui-wu Ta-ch'en before issue.

I am, &c.

(Signed) ROBERT HART,
Inspector-General.

No. 15.

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received December 2.)

(Telegraphic.)

Peking, December 2, 1906.

MY telegram of 31st October.

I am informed that "Customs Gazette" was published some days ago at Shanghai.

CHINA. No. 2 (1906).

FURTHER Correspondence relating to the Decree issued by the Chinese Government on May 9, 1906, respecting the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty. December 1906.
